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WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1.   A method for indicating the priority of a Voice Over Internet Protocol (VoIP) call, comprising:

receiving a dialed number for a connection;

5   generating a call setup request including the dialed number;

receiving a priority for the call based on user input provided contemporaneously with the dialed number;

generating a priority indicator based on the 10 priority; and

transmitting the call setup request and priority indicator.

2.   The method of Claim 1, wherein the priority 15 indicator is an information element (IE).

3.   The method of Claim 2, further comprising:

receiving an alerting phrase from the user; and

transmitting the alerting phrase with the priority 20 indicator.

4.   The method of Claim 1, wherein the priority is high.

25   5.   The method of Claim 1, wherein the priority is low.

6.   The method of Claim 1, wherein the user input is received after the call setup request has been 30 transmitted.

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7.   The method of Claim 1, wherein the user input is received as a prefix to the dialed number.

5   8.   The method of Claim 1, further comprising generating the priority in response to at least activation of a button on an input device by the user.

9.   The method of Claim 1, further comprising
10   prompting the user for the priority with an automated system.

10.   The method of Claim 1, further comprising generating the priority in response to at least a spoken
15   input sound recognized by voice recognition logic.

11.   The method of Claim 1, further comprising:
accessing a rule base to validate the priority; and
20   negating the priority indicator if determined invalid based on the rule base.

12.   The method of Claim 11, further comprising validating the priority at a calling party device.

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13.   The method of Claim 11, further comprising validating the priority at a called party device.

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14. The method of Claim 11, wherein the rule base is based on statistical information gathered regarding the calling party device.

5   15. The method of Claim 11, wherein the rule base is based on statistical information gathered regarding both the calling and called parties' devices.

16. The method of Claim 11, wherein the rule base 10 is based on input provided by a user at a called party device.

17. A method for indicating the priority of a Voice Over Internet Protocol (VoIP) call, comprising:

receiving a call setup request to a dialed number;

5   receiving a priority indicator for the connection based on user input provided contemporaneously with the dialed number;

processing the call setup request to set up a connection; and

10   transmitting the priority indicator for delivery to a destination device for indication to a call recipient.

18. The method of Claim 17, wherein the priority indicator is an information element (IE).

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19. The method of Claim 18, further comprising:

receiving an alerting phrase from the user; and

transmitting the alerting phrase with the priority indicator.

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20. The method of Claim 17, wherein the priority is high.

21. The method of Claim 17, wherein the priority is 25   low.

22. The method of Claim 17, wherein the user input is received after the call setup request has been processed.

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    23. The method of Claim 17, wherein the user input is received as a prefix to the dialed number.

    24. The method of Claim 17, further comprising:

5   accessing a rule base to validate the priority; and

          negating the priority indicator if determined invalid based on the rule base.

10   25. The method of Claim 24, wherein the rule base is based on statistical information gathered regarding the calling party device.

    26. The method of Claim 24, wherein the rule base
15 is based on statistical information gathered regarding a combination of the calling and call parties' devices.

    27. The method of Claim 24, wherein the rule base is based on input provided by a user at a called party
20 device.

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28. A method for indicating the priority of a Voice Over Internet Protocol (VoIP) call, comprising:

ringing a dialed number to establish a connection with a calling party;

5 receiving a priority indicator for the connection based on user input provided contemporaneously with the dialed number;

indicating to a call recipient the priority of the connection.

10 29. The method of Claim 28, wherein the priority indicator is an information element (IE).

30. The method of Claim 29, further comprising:

receiving an alerting phrase from the user; and

15 transmitting the alerting phrase with the priority indicator.

31. The method of Claim 28, wherein the priority is high.

20 high.

32. The method of Claim 28, wherein the priority is low.

low.

25 33. The method of Claim 28, further comprising:

accessing a rule base to validate the priority; and

indicating the priority if valid.

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34. The method of Claim 33, wherein the rule base is based on the statistical information gathered regarding the calling party device.

5   35. The method of Claim 33, wherein the rule base is based on statistical information gathered regarding a combination of the calling and called parties' devices.

36. The method of Claim 33, wherein the rule base
10   is based on input provided by a user at a called party device.

37. The method of Claim 28, wherein the call priority is indicated by a distinctive ring.

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38. The method of Claim 28, wherein the call priority is indicated by a flashing light.

39. The method of Claim 28, wherein the call
20   priority is indicated by a display on an LCD display.

40. The method of Claim 28, wherein the call priority is indicated by a spoken phrase.

25   41. The method of Claim 40, wherein the spoken phrase is a pre-recorded voice file.

42. The method of Claim 40, wherein the spoken phrase is a real-time uttered phrase of the calling
30   party.

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43. A system, comprising:

logic encoded in media; and,

the logic being operable to receive a dialed number for a connection; generate a call setup request including 5 the dialed number; receive a priority for the call based on user input provided contemporaneously with the dialed number; generate a priority indicator based on the priority; transmit the call setup request and priority indicator.

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44. The system of Claim 43, wherein the priority indicator is an information element (IE).

45. The system of Claim 44, the logic further 15 operable to:

receive an alerting phrase from the user; and

transmit the alerting phrase with the priority indicator.

20 46. The system of Claim 43, wherein the priority is high.

47. The system of Claim 43, wherein the priority is low.

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48. The system of Claim 43, wherein the user input is received after the call setup request has been transmitted.

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49. The system of Claim 43, wherein the user input is received as a prefix to the dialed number.

50. The system of Claim 43, the logic further operable to generate the priority in response to at least activation of a button on an input device by the user.

51. The system of Claim 43, the logic further operable to prompt the user for the priority with an automated system.

52. The system of Claim 43, the logic further operable to generate the priority in response to at least a spoken input recognized by voice recognition logic.

53. The system of Claim 43, the logic further operable to:

access a rule base to validate the priority request; and

negate the priority indicator if determined invalid based on the rule base.

54. The system of Claim 53, the logic further operable to validate the priority at a calling party device.

55. The system of Claim 53, the logic further operable to validate the priority at a called party device.

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56. The system of Claim 53, wherein the rule base is based on statistical information gathered regarding the calling party device.

5   57. The system of Claim 53, wherein the rule base is based on statistical information gathered regarding a combination of the calling and called parties' devices.

10   58. The system of Claim 53, wherein the rule base is based on input provided by a user at a called party device.

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59.   A system, comprising:

logic encoded in media; and,

the logic being operable to receive a call setup request to a dialed number; receive a priority indicator for the connection based on user input provided contemporaneously with the dialed number; process the call setup request to set up a connection; and transmit the priority indicator for delivery to a destination device for indication to a call recipient.

60.   The system of Claim 59, wherein the priority indicator is an information element (IE).

61.   The system of Claim 59, the logic further operable to:

receive an alerting phrase from the user; and

transmit the alerting phrase with the priority indicator.

62.   The system of Claim 59, wherein the priority is high.

63.   The system of Claim 59, wherein the priority is low.

64.   The system of Claim 59, wherein the user input is received after the call setup request has been processed.

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65. The system of Claim 59, wherein the user input is received as a prefix to the dialed number.

66. The system of Claim 59, the logic further operable to:

access a rule base to validate the priority request; and

negate the priority indicator if determined invalid based on the rule base.

67. The system of Claim 66, wherein the rule base is based on statistical information gathered regarding the calling party device .

68. The system of Claim 66, wherein the rule base is based on statistical information gathered regarding a combination of the calling and called parties' devices.

69. The system of Claim 66, wherein the rule base is based on input provided by a user at a called party device.

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70. A system, comprising:

logic encoded in media; and,

the logic being operable to ring a dialed number to establish a connection with a calling party; receive a priority indicator for the connection based on user input provided contemporaneously with the dialed number; indicate to a call recipient the priority of the connection.

71. The system of Claim 70, wherein the priority indicator is an information element (IE).

72. The system of Claim 71, the logic further operable to:

receive an alerting phrase from the user; and

transmit the alerting phrase with the priority indicator.

73. The system of Claim 70, wherein the priority is high.

74. The system of Claim 70, wherein the priority is low.

75. The system of Claim 70, the logic further operable to:

access a rule base to validate the priority request; and

indicate the priority if valid.

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76. The system of Claim 75, wherein the rule base is based on statistical information gathered regarding the calling party device.

5   77. The system of Claim 75, wherein the rule base is based on statistical information gathered regarding a combination of the calling and called parties' devices.

78. The system of Claim 75, wherein the rule base
10   is based on input provided by a user at a called party device.

79. The system of Claim 75, wherein the call priority is indicated by a distinctive ring.

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80. The system of Claim 75, wherein the call priority is indicated by a flashing light.

81. The system of Claim 75, wherein the call
20   priority is indicated by a display on an LCD display.

82. The system of Claim 75, wherein the call priority is indicated by a spoken phrase.

25   83. The system of Claim 82, wherein the spoken phrase is a pre-recorded voice file.

84. The system of Claim 82, wherein the spoken phrase is a real-time uttered phrase of the calling
30   party.

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85. A system, comprising:

a means for receiving a dialed number for a connection;

a means for generating a call setup request 5 including the dialed number;

a means for receiving a priority for the call based on user input provided contemporaneously with the dialed number;

a means for generating a priority indicator based on 10 the priority;

a means for transmitting the call setup request and priority indicator.

86. The system of Claim 85, wherein the priority 15 indicator is an information element (IE).

87. The system of Claim 85, further comprising:

a means for receiving an alerting phrase from the user; and

20 a means for transmitting the alerting phrase with the priority indicator.

88. The system of Claim 85, wherein the priority is high.

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89. The system of Claim 85, wherein the priority is low.

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90. The system of Claim 85, wherein the user input is received after the call setup request has been processed.

91. The system of Claim 85, wherein the user input is received as a prefix to the dialed number.

92. The system of Claim 85, further comprising a means for generating the priority in response to at least activation of a button on an input device.

93. The system of Claim 85, further comprising a means for prompting the user for the priority with an automated system.

94. The system of Claim 85, further comprising a means for generating the priority in response to at least a spoken input recognized by voice recognition logic.

95. The system of Claim 85, further comprising:
a means for accessing a rule base to validate the priority request; and
a means for negating the priority indicator if determined invalid based on the rule base.

96. The system of Claim 95, further comprising a means for validating the priority at a calling party device.

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97. The system of Claim 95, further comprising a
means for validating the priority at the called party
device.

5   98. The system of Claim 95, wherein the rule base
is based on statistical information gathered regarding
the calling party device.

99. The system of Claim 95, wherein the rule base
10 is based on statistical information gathered regarding a
combination of the calling and called parties' devices.

100. The system of Claim 95, wherein the rule base
is based on input provided by a user at a called party
15 device.

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101. A system, comprising:

a means for receiving a call setup request to a dialed number;

a means for receiving a priority indicator for the connection based on user input provided contemporaneously with the dialed number;

a means for processing the call setup request to set up a connection; and

a means for transmitting the priority indicator for delivery to a destination device for indication to a call recipient.

102. The system of Claim 101, wherein the priority indicator is an information element (IE).

103. The system of Claim 102, further comprising:

a means for receiving an alerting phrase from the user; and

a means for transmitting the alerting phrase with the priority indicator.

104. The system of Claim 101, wherein the priority is high.

105. The system of Claim 101, wherein the priority is low.

106. The system of Claim 101, wherein the user input is received after the call setup request has been processed.

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107. The system of Claim 101, wherein the user input is received as a prefix to the dialed number.

5   108. The system of Claim 101, further comprising:

a means for accessing a rule base to validate the priority request; and

a means for negating the priority indicator if determined invalid based on the rule base.

10   109. The system of Claim 108, wherein the rule base is based on statistical information gathered regarding the calling party device.

15   110. The system of Claim 108, wherein the rule base is based on statistical information gathered regarding a combination of the calling and called parties' devices.

111. The system of Claim 108, wherein the rule base
20   is based on input provided by a user at a called party device.

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112. A system, comprising:

a means for ringing a dialed number to establish a connection with a calling party;

a means for receiving a priority indicator for the connection based on user input provided contemporaneously with the dialed number;

a means for indicating to a call recipient the priority of the connection.

113. The system of Claim 112, wherein the priority indicator is an information element (IE).

114. The system of Claim 113, further comprising:

a means for receiving an alerting phrase from the user; and

a means for transmitting the alerting phrase with the priority indicator.

115. The system of Claim 112, wherein the priority is high.

116. The system of Claim 112, wherein the priority is low.

117. The system of Claim 112, further comprising:

a means for accessing a rule base to validate the priority request; and

a means for indicating the priority if valid.

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118. The system of Claim 117, wherein the rule base is based on statistical information gathered regarding the calling party device.

5   119. The system of Claim 117, wherein the rule base is based on statistical information regarding a combination of the calling and called parties' devices.

120. The system of Claim 117, wherein the rule base
10   is based on input provided by a user at a called party device.

121. The system of Claim 117, wherein the call priority is indicated by a distinctive ring.

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122. The system of Claim 117, wherein the call priority is indicated by a flashing light.

123. The system of Claim 117, wherein the call
20   priority is indicated by a display on an LCD display.

124. The system of Claim 117, wherein the call priority is indicated by a spoken phrase.

25   125. The system of Claim 124, wherein the spoken phrase is a pre-recorded voice file.

126. The system of Claim 124, wherein the spoken phrase is a real-time uttered phrase by the calling
30   party.

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127. A method for indicating the priority of Voice Over Internet Protocol (VoIP) calls, comprising:

        receiving contemporaneously with placement of a call a user specified priority for the call; and

5   communicating the user specified priority as part of placement of the call for indication of the priority to a called party.

128. The method of Claim 127, wherein the user 10 specified priority is independent of the user and the called party.

129. The method of Claim 127, further comprising blocking indication of the priority based on input 15 provided by the called party.